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SUBJECT: CUBAN DISSIDENTS CONNECT LIVE WITH SLOVAKS IN
INSPIRATIONAL WEBCAST

REF: A. HAVANA 332

[1](#)B. BRATISLAVA 140

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY. Cuban youth dissidents and former Slovak dissidents and student leaders from the 1989 Velvet Revolution connected live via webcast on April 3 to share experiences. On the same day that Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos concluded his visit to Cuba (ref A), Embassy Bratislava hosted 40 Slovaks who offered advice and moral support to 20 Cubans, hosted by USINT Havana, in an event that was inspirational for all involved. Embassy Bratislava will continue to support the promotion of human and civil rights in Cuba through targeted events. END SUMMARY.

20 CUBANS, 40 SLOVAKS, ONE CONNECTION

[1](#)2. (U) On April 3 - the same day that Spanish Foreign Minister Moratinos finished his visit to Cuba, forty Slovaks from government, parliament, NGOs, and student groups gathered in the Embassy to speak with twenty Cuban youth dissidents and independent journalists in Havana by webcast. The occasion allowed participants to discuss issues of political dissent, ranging from peaceful resistance to wrongful imprisonment. The Cuban dissidents earned applause from the Slovaks, who exhorted them to "continue the struggle." The Cubans, gathered in the COM's residence in Havana, repeatedly expressed their thanks for the willingness of the Slovaks to share experiences and hopes.

[1](#)3. (U) Former Slovak dissident Miroslav Kusy and Velvet Revolution student leaders Zuzana Mistrikova, Anton Popovic, and Filip Vagac described their experiences in opposing the former regime and helping the transition to democracy in Czechoslovakia. Chairman of the parliamentary human rights committee Laszlo Nagy (Party of the Hungarian Coalition, SMK), a member of the intelligentsia who also helped with the transition, moderated the event. Also sitting at the front table, Chairman of the Christian Democratic Movement (KDH), former Speaker of Parliament, and current MP Pavol Hrusovsky assured the Cuban dissidents that concerned people across the Atlantic care and speak out about the Cuban dissidents. Working in an information vacuum, the Cubans were heartened to hear that their cause is known and supported outside their country.

WHAT HAPPENS THE DAY AFTER?

[1](#)4. (U) One question the Cubans posed to the Slovaks: "What

happened to the Communists after the revolution? Are they still among you?" The reply that former oppressors are living and working in Slovak society today was surprising to the Cubans. The Slovaks explained that the cycle of oppression had to break, that retaliation was not the path to democracy. Cementing this theme, the Slovaks recommended that the Cubans learn as much as possible about individual rights and responsibilities and the rule of law to prepare for the day they can begin to build their own democracy.

15. (U) For their part, the Slovaks asked the Cubans directly what they could do to help support their cause. The Cubans responded that continued moral support and financial support when possible would be helpful. MP Nagy pointed out that members of the Slovak audience had made trips to Cuba carrying money and encouragement for the democratic cause (ref B). KDH leader Hrusovsky mentioned the Cuban dissident whom he has "adopted".

THE PARTICIPANTS

16. (U) Robert Zanyony, Deputy Spokesperson for Prime Minister Fico, attended the webcast, as did the MFA's Cuba desk officer and head of the Latin America section. The international secretaries for KDH and SDKU (Slovak Democratic and Christian Union) sat in the audience. The NGOs Pontis Foundation, People in Peril, Hlava 98, Citizen and Democracy and the think-tank Slovak Foreign Policy Association were represented. Local university and high school students also attended the event to show their support.

17. (SBU) In Havana, Slovak DCM Anton Jurkovic helped USINT moderate the event. Cuban attendees were: independent journalist Carlos Serpa Maceira, independent journalist (and

BRATISLAVA 00000211 002 OF 002

75er) Jorge Olivera Castillo, Ahmed Rodriguez Albacia (Young People Against Censorship, JSC), Belinda Garcia (JSC), Ricardo Rodriguez Borrego (Alternative Republican Movement), Edgard Lopez Moreno (Marti Youth Coalition, CJM), Orlando Valdespino Mont (CJM), Caridad Martin Garcia (CJM), Alexander Decon Perez (CJM), Giselle Fernandez Estrada (CJM), Antoine Clemente Hernandez (CJM), Livan Ruiz Brito (CJM), Yunieles Rivera Mena (CJM), Nestor Rodriguez Lobaina (Cuban Youth Movement for Democracy), Enrique LastNameUnknown (Cuban Youth Movement for Democracy), Alvaro Yero Felipe (Cuban Human Rights Foundation), Yeney Santiuste Garcia (relative of "Ladies in White" supporter), Ignacio Estrada (Cuban Human Rights Foundation for HIV/AIDS sufferers).

COMMENT

18. (U) Following the successful webcast, Slovak participants relayed their pleasure in passing on their knowledge, experiences, and emotional support to the Cubans. Both sides felt inspired and energized by the event. In Charge's closing comments to the assembled Slovaks, he urged the young Slovak students to exercise their voice in civil society at home and abroad and praised the work of Slovak NGOs. In addition to supporting transformational diplomacy directly across borders, this webcast enabled us to highlight for Slovak government officials the crucial role that their own NGOs play in democracy promotion.

OTHER EMBASSY ACTIVITIES

9.(SBU) On March 16, the Ambassador gave an interview at the Pontis Foundation's successful "Cage of Solidarity" event commemorating the 2003 crackdown on 75 peaceful Cuban dissidents. The Embassy provided support to the event in

terms of planning advice, lending of equipment, and providing posters of 10 Cuban dissidents for display. Next on the agenda, the Ambassador intends to host a discussion group at the end of April featuring the Slovak participants (including KDH MP and former Justice Minister Daniel Lipsic and NGO reps) in the International Committee for Democracy in Cuba (ICDC) conference in Berlin.

SILVERMAN